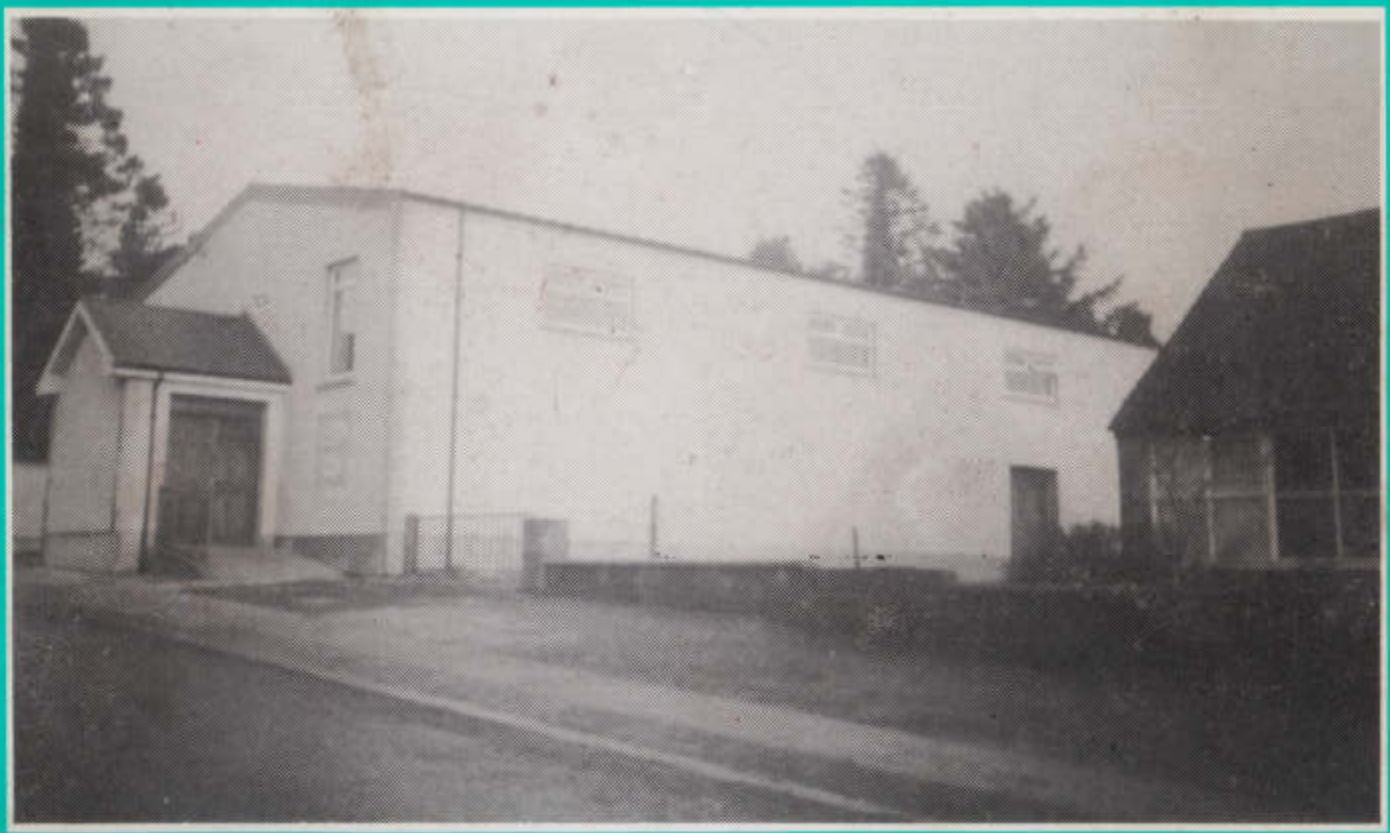
ST. BRIGID'S COMMUNITY CENTRE GOWNA



OFFICIAL OPENING

on Sunday, 12th February, 1995

Commemorative Booklet

PRICE £3.00

ST. BRIGID'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, GOWNA

OFFICIAL OPENING

Sunday, 12th February, 1995

at 3 p.m. by

THE RT. REV. MONSIGNOR
PATRICK EARLEY, P.P. V.G.

and

THE RT. REV. M. H. G. MAYES, D.D.,
Bishop of Kilmore, Ardagh and Elphin

Assisted by

Fr. James Bland, P.P., Chairman;
Fr. James Ward, Pastoral Assistant;
Canon Jack Watson, Rector, Arva.

FOREWORD

FR. JAMES BLAND,
P.P. Loch Gowna since 1986.

I WARMLY welcome this booklet commemorating the official opening of St. Brigid's Community Centre. It gives us a worthwhile little bit of history tracing the connection between Gowna's halls over 90 years. The re-building of St. Brigid's Hall to form the Centre can truly be said to be a real community effort. The work of the Committee in planning and carrying out the project benefitted from the special expertise, gifts of organisation and the voluntary work of many. The response to fund-raising all over the parish and wider area was sustained and generous. The whole effort has brought with it much more than a physical building. It has really been a builder of community, an ecumenical exercise too, bringing our two communities even closer together. The sense of local pride, loyalty and commitment already shown in parish pastoral work, on GAA fields, in promoting Tourism and Area Development is further enhanced.

We now have a further focal point for the activities of the parish in this great indoor amenity, which will cater for the needs of all age-groups for years to come. St. Brigid, who came from our diocese originally, and who gives a special name to the Centre, was a great community person, using her monastery as a centre for hospitality, alms-giving and care of the sick over a wide area. She should inspire us to continue to use our God-given gifts too for the benefit of others, especially by using the Centre to the best advantage.

May the official opening of St. Brigid's Community Centre be a real cause for celebration on the day, and also at our Sunday worship. I implore God's blessing on the Centre, on all who brought it about, on those who administer it, and on all, who will use it to enrich their lives, and contribute to the good of our community.

JAMES BLAND, P.P.,
Chairman.

ST. BRIGID

THE first St. Brigid was born c. 454. Her youth was spent herding and milking cattle and making butter. Brigid wished to consecrate herself to God's service. Her father refused permission but seeing her determination he consented to allow her to take the veil. She received the veil and spiritual formation, probably from St. Mel, and stayed for a period under his direction in Ardagh.

Others followed her example and this led her to found a double monastery in Kildare with the assistance of Bishop Conleth. Her life depicts her as an active nun, living with her community but often travelling for either evangelical or charitable purposes. Hospitality, alms-giving and care of the sick were her main preoccupation. Though her monastery was small in her lifetime, her reputation for genuine holiness earned her the title of Mary of the Gael. By the eighth century she was entitled leader of the virgins of Ireland. She died in 524 and her cult is widespread not only throughout Ireland but in a number of continental European lands.

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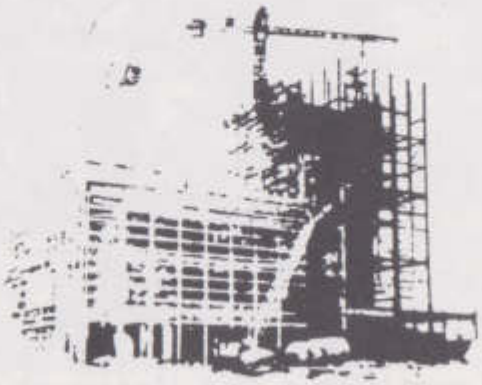

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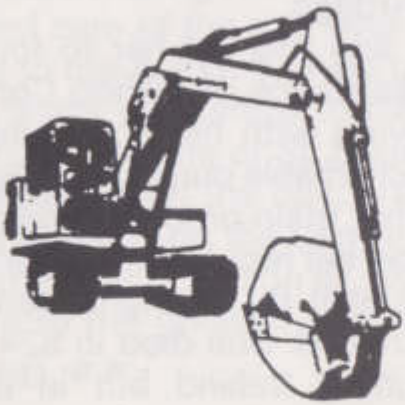

Plant Hire
Demolition

GOWNA HALL
Past, Present and Future

In the old cemetery there stands a headstone to the memory of the late Harriet Coyle, a lady who back in 1837 was instrumental in acquiring from the then landlord, Mr. Sloane, a plot of land to provide a site for a church and a graveyard. The Church was used from 1837-1906 when the present Church of the Holy Family was built. The old church was then converted into a hall to provide a social centre for the parish. Dances and concerts were held there, and the ever popular Jimmy O'Dea and Harry O'Donovan provided entertainment there in 1932.

A GRAND CONCERT
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In aid of Mullinalaghta Church Fund
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Top Irish entertainers Jimmy O'Dea and Harry O'Donovan in Gowna 1932.

As times were changing the parish priest of the time, Rev. H. Doyle, saw the necessity for a new hall. The provision of a suitable site was the first difficulty. Again, a lady solved the problem. The late Brigid O'Reilly (more affectionately known as Baby "O") presented the parish with an excellent site and requested that the new hall be known as "St. Brigid's". Plans were soon drawn up and Mr. O'Higgins, Longford, was appointed as engineer at a fee of £15. Materials were supplied

by Patrick Connolly, Ballinagh, costing £240. Steel principals were delivered by J. McCorry, Shercock at £37-10s. Contractors were the late Paddy McGahern and his son, the present John F., Corfree, who used an ass and winch to lift the steel trusses into position.

Paddy McGahern and Ned Fagan, in 1937, resting on the roof of St. Brigid's Hall during construction.

From left — Ned Fagan, Sonny McGahern and Joe Reilly beside Sonny's new Ford outsite St. Brigid's Hall.

The stone masons were the Brennan brothers, Drumbruckles, and were attended by Philip McStay, Terry Smith and Jim Pierson. And just to prove that human nature was always easily frayed, it is told how two of the above mentioned had a difference of opinion on one occasion. This led to blows being struck and one man had to receive medical attention. But peace was quickly restored and all was well. Parishioners gave free labour drawing sand and stones to the site. The slates and stones from the old hall were incorporated into the new building. Work on the building was completed in one year at a total cost of £760, and so on October 9th, 1938, St. Brigid's Hall was formally opened with a concert which featured entertainment by local artistes and the Belturbet Dramatic Troupe. Takings on the night amounted to £33-3s-10d. At the opening ceremony the late Miss O'Reilly, donor of the site, presented the Parish Priest, the Rev. H. Doyle, with a picture of St. Brigid which hung in the hall for many years. Two nights later, on October 11th, a meeting took place to elect a committee to help with the satisfactory running of the hall. The following members were elected: Thomas Hourican, Harry O'Reilly, Edward Shiels, Philip O'Reilly (the bridge), Brendan Scanlon, Patrick Donohoe, Patrick Kiernan, James McStay, Thomas Reilly, Master Smith, Master Murray, Patrick Shiels, Patrick McGahern, James Madden, P. J. O'Reilly (Packie Joe), John McNamee, John Dalton, Patsy Brady and J. P. Lynch — the last two named being the only surviving members of that committee. A code of rules was drawn up to govern the hall. The question of lettings was

Two founder members of Gowna Dramatic Society (l. to r.) — Paddy Donohoe, P. Reilly.

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debated. This was considered to be a source of revenue and so a fee of £1-10s per night was agreed. A caretaker, namely Sean Friary, Cornagran, was appointed at £5 per annum. This increased to £6 some years later in line with inflation. It was decided to hold 1-shilling dances on the first and third Sunday night of each month and six late night dances in the year. A dramatic troupe was formed under the guidance of Packie Joe O'Reilly, Patrick Donohoe, Patsy Brady, James McStay and Patrick Kiernan. This troupe was known as Gowna Dramatic Society. Two plays were staged each year, St. Stephen's Night and Easter Sunday being the two annual events which were eagerly awaited. People looked forward so much to seeing the local figures portray many different characters.

Loch Gowna G.F.C.

Concert

St. Brigid's Hall Gowna on St. Stephen's night 1956. Gowna Players present

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The first play staged was "Paid In His Own Coin" and featured Paddy Donohoe, Tommy Halton, Annie Halton, Bernyhill, Pee Reilly, Mulrick, Packie Joe and Maggie Ann O'Reilly, Michael Grimes and Mary Ann Gilmore, Gowna. The troupe enjoyed continued success with changes in personnel right up to 1976. Amongst the many productions were Nano, Shaunmore, Mollie Bawn, My Old Irish Mother, Many Young Men of Twenty and Shadow of a Gunman.

GOWNA DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Cast of Shadow of a Gunman. Back row (l. to r.) — Paddy Sheils, Sean Cullen, Sean Hughes, Barry Hughes. Front row (l. to r.) — Tommy Reilly, Christine Wrynne, Josie Cullen.

So after fifty years the curtain dropped on an era of entertainment and, hopefully, the audience enjoyed the performance as much as the actors did. One guiding light during the reign of the Gowna Dramatic Society was the late Charlie Cullen (The loop). They were never lacking in talent around Gowna and a full supporting cast would line out for the concerts. When Michael Joe and Michael A. Dobson rattled the stage with their step dancing, or the Frawley sisters in their cowboy outfits sang "There's A Bridle Hanging On The Wall" and the late Margaret O'Reilly (R.I.P.) raised the hearts of everybody — whether it be with The Blackbird of Sweet Avondale or the parody on Galway Bay, all added up to a great night's entertainment.

Changing times and the advent of television provided new forms of entertainment for a younger generation. The touring companies were another regular feature in St. Brigid's. Names like Baileys, McCarrick, Kathleen Martin and Carrickford come to mind — Nicholas Carrickford being the father of Robert Carrickford, alias Stephen Brennan, in the

popular TV series, Glenroe. The climate was not always kind to the touring companies. One group, who being stormbound in Gowna, ran short of food in War times and was generously provided for by three kind ladies — Mrs. Pearson, Mrs. Nolan and Maggie Ann O'Reilly. One othe such incident, I recall, was when Jackie McCarthy, a member of a travelling show which split up, leaving him without money or lodging was taken care of by the kindness of Mrs. Tom O'Reilly. To enable him to get on his way a dance was held in St. Brigid's and the takings gladly given to him. He was so impressed that he said he would never forget Loch Gowna and its people. Nor did he. When the hall was opened it was felt that a dance band would be an asset, the hall committee purchasing the instruments on condition that the band played free of charge for twenty nights so as to pay back in kind the cost of the instruments which amounted to £29-6s. The band was named the Staff Dance Band. Members were: J. P. Lynch, Vincent Reynolds, Benny Friary, Seamus Reilly, Eddie Brady, Patsy Brady, Paddy Smith and Frank Scanlon. Over the years members came and went and the band changed names from the Staff Dance Band to Lynch's Band and, in the 'fifties, to a more modern Grafton Band. When sisters Peggy and Sarah Lynch, Kitty Scanlon, Mrs. Nolan together with Michael Smith, Brendan Finlay, P. J. O'Reilly and Larry Cunningham lined out on stage.

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"SWITCH-ON" OF ELECTRIC LIGHT IN GOWNA, 1948

Left to right — 'Master' Hugh Murryay, Harry O'Reilly (partly hidden), Rev. Anderson, Rector; Dr. T. Curran (Australian Ambassador to Ireland), Fr. Doyle, P.P., and Fr. P. Murtagh, C.C.; Mr. M. McCarthy, E.S.B. at mike.

Another big event which took place in St. Brigid's was when in 1948 the Australian Ambassador to Ireland switched on the electricity in Gowna and surrounding townlands bringing a whole new dimension to the use of the hall thus enabling an efficient ladies committee to cook and serve dinner to the participating clergy at the funeral Mass of the late Fr. Doyle.

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All down the years Gowna portrayed a great community spirit with all the different organisations working hand in hand. So numerous were the different clubs using the hall as meeting rooms that at one stage somebody remarked there would need to be another couple of nights in the week to facilitate them all. Apart from football and camogie there was Local Security, Local Defence, Irish Red Cross, Ploughing Association, Irish Country Women, Pioneers, Gun Club and Macra na Feirme, the latter winning trophies at local and national level.

MACRA NA FEIRME STOCK-JUDGING WINNERS IN THE '50's

Left to right — Larry Brady, Sean Hughes with trophies won at county and national level.

Michael Brady, Cortober and Seamus Reilly, Corfree, also won awards. Even the bachelors of the area had their moments of glory in St. Brigid's when in '58 a bread baking competition was held and all the eligible young men took out the baking bowl and wooden spoon to test their skills.

The winner of the competition was Seamus O'Reilly who, ironically, was the first to leave the club as he married Rosaleen Madden shortly afterwards and the 'baking' became more domestic. Apart from the elected committee there were always the old reliables who were always willing to give a helping hand and make sure their hall was properly run. A few names worthy of note are: Phil Keogan, James

Mahon, Ned Kiernan (Charlie), Paddy Reilly (Luke), Paddy F. Brady, Jimmy Duffy, Tommy Mahon, Sean Hughes, Ned Grey, Ned Donohoe, Phelim O'Reilly, Packie Masterson, Patsy Keogh and, last but not least, Jimmy Sloane, whose expertise was always welcome. The ladies of the area were never lacking in support. Again, names like Brigid Duffy, Josephine O'Reilly, Bee White, Sarah Moore and others were always ready to make the pot of tea, or sell tickets, or maybe stitch a fraying curtain.

Those who took part in the Bachelors' Bread-baking competition around 1958. Back row (l. to r.) — Tommie Boylan, Sean Hughes, John Lenihan, Mickey Smith, Pat McClean. Middle row (l. to r.) — T. P. Tierney, Sean Kiernan, Seamus Reilly (the winner), Felim O'Reilly, Paddy Brady. Front row (l. to r.) — Barry Hughes, Tommy Langtry, Jack Smith, Pat Sheils.

DOWN the years St. Brigid's Hall was the most popular venue around. Crowds came from Mullahoran, Mullinalaghta, Corduff, Cornafean, Ballinagh, Columcille and further afield. Not many owned cars then. Most people travelled on bicycles, some by pony and trap or cart. Part of the time there were two dances held weekly on Sunday and Thursday nights. The many different organisations in the parish booked the hall a year in advance for these events. Bookings took place around Christmas for the coming year. The fee was £12 in the fifties.

Weekly ceilidhes were held around 1944 to raise money for the restoration of the old Ball Alley. Admission was six old pennies. Master Murray, go ndeana Dia trocaire ar a anam, taught us all the ceilidhe dances. Ned and Tommy Brady provided the music and many a winter's night was enjoyably spent in houses around the parish practising the steps for the next night. St. Brigid's featured many of the

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leading Bands of that time. To mention a few: the Staff Dance Band, later known as John P. Lynch's Band, McMahon's, Steven Garvey's, The Dixies, Tim Fitzpatrick's, Billy Hughes, T.V. Tones, Mighty Avons, Mallon's, Pat Kelly, Bright Lights and many more.

There was a lot of fund-raising done in St. Brigid's Hall especially in the early years. A fund-raising campaign for the building of Mullinalaghta Church started in 1937, ending when the Church was opened on the 5th of October, 1941. The cost of the building was £7,700 and in aid of which a major Bazaar was held in June 1940. Preparations for the Bazaar started in February. Kitchen dances were held in many houses around the parish. Also card games with the prize for the winner being a ten shilling note. Approximately six ladies undertook to run a stall each with the help of four or five hard-working helpers. There was a prize for the person whose stall made the most money. Each stall had a name. Mrs. Harry O'Reilly won the prize. The name of her stall was "Erin", which raised the huge sum of £90. This was some achievement with tickets selling at one penny each. The gentlemen were also to the fore assisting in the collection of prizes from many different places, also ticket selling and in charge of the many different games. The Bazaar lasted four nights and raised a substantial sum of money.

Affluence played its part in the demise of the smaller halls in the late fifties and the showband era put paid to them. In 1970/'71, the late Canon Boylan was approached to lease the hall as a temporary factory. He saw this as a source of revenue to meet insurance costs and also to create much-needed employment until the new Aircell factory was built. When the hall was vacated it was rarely used from then on as it was unsafe. As promised, Aircell donated the insulation for the new Community Centre. It remained idle until 1985 when a committee was formed with a view to reconstructing the hall. Members of the committee were made up from all the organisations as follows:

Rev. Canon E. J. Boylan (R.I.P.), Chairman; Michael Dobson, Vice-Chairman; Marcella O'Reilly, Secretary; Paul Comiskey, Assistant Secretary; Sean Hughes, Joint Treasurer; Alan Sloane, Joint Treasurer; Brendan Finlay, Scór; Eileen McNaboe, Scór; Mary Gormley, Tidy Towns; John F. Smith, Tidy Towns; Philip Hourican, G.A.A.; Phelim O'Reilly (R.I.P.), G.A.A.; Una McGahern, Camogie; Barry Hughes, Camogie; Bridie Smith, Senior Citizens; Helen Murray, Senior Citizens; Mrs. Kathleen O'Reilly, Ladies' Committee; Sheila O'Reilly, Ladies' Committee; Kieran Smith, Anglers; Paul Comiskey, Anglers; Peadar Morris, Handball; John Pierson, Handball; Mary Smith, Tourism; Veronica Conaty, Tourism.

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P.P. Loch Gowna 1967 - 1986.

THE LATE CANON EDWARD J. BOYLAN

EDWARD J. BOYLAN, Drumhowragh, Loughduff, was born at the close of the last century, 14/12/1899. He was educated at Loughduff N.S.; St. Mary's Latin School, Moyne; St. Mel's College, Longford, and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. He was ordained on June 17th, 1928. He served two years on the English Mission in Manchester. On his return he was appointed to the teaching staff of St. Mel's College, Longford and later St. Mary's, Moyne.

In 1936, he was appointed curate in Ballinalee and later ministered in Mohill, Annaduff and Cloone, Co. Leitrim, where he was appointed P.P. in 1964. In 1967, he was appointed P.P. to Scrabby and Columbcille East and was appointed Canon of the Cathedral Chapter on September 7th, 1978 in Gowna until his retirement in 1986 at the age of 87.

He had a remarkable memory and wrote three books in his time. His first book, "The Latin School, Moyne", was mainly an account of the many priests who attended the school. Fr. Frank Gray, a native of Dromard Parish, gave him valuable assistance in compiling the book.

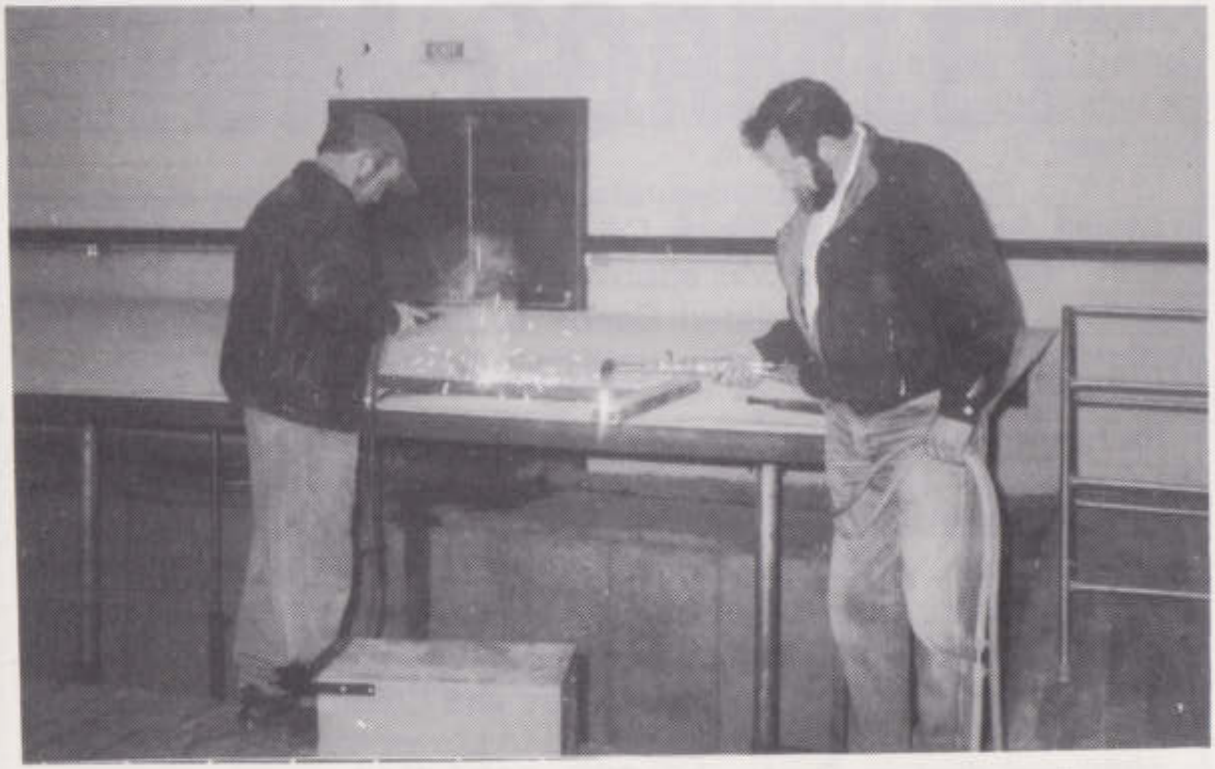
Then he wrote a history of his native parish, Mullahoran, for which he always had a great regard.

Finally, he wrote a history of Scrabby and Columbcille East where he ended his pastoral career. He retired to Lower Main St., Bailieboro', in 1986 and died on September 27th, 1994. R.I.P.

RESTORATION OF ST. BRIGID'S HALL

ON 4-12-1986 Fr. James Bland, the newly appointed parish priest of Loch Gowna and Mullinalaghta, called a meeting of the community centre committee. The purpose of this meeting was to consider restructuring the old St. Brigid's Hall with the aid of an Anco scheme. All channels were explored and it was decided that a reconstruction job was not practical. The idea of a new community centre on a site convenient to the Parochial House was also discussed. But the wish of the majority of parishioners was that St. Brigid's be restored on its former site because of its central location and close proximity to the school. When drawing up new plans it was discovered that more space was needed in order to facilitate some indoor sports. The late Patrick Kiernan, Gowna, very graciously donated a portion of his garden towards the project which allowed plans to proceed. The plans and costings were then put on view for all the community to see in St. Patrick's N.S. on February 20th and 21st, 1988, and they met with unanimous approval. Fund-raising was the next priority and it was decided by the committee not to start the project until £20,000 was raised. The first £200 made towards this was raised by two groups of gallant ladies from the Senior Citizens Committee who went out as wren boys in December, 1987, with music being supplied by Barry Hughes and the late Paddy Bannon, Dingins.

In April, 1988, the first Tea Party was held in the Park House Hotel, Edgeworthstown. Music was supplied by Eddie Fitzsimons and his



From left — Sheamus Smith and John Reilly busy working on the stage.

Band and a crowd in excess of 400 had a wonderful night. This added £1750 to the funds. In June, 1988 the committee launched the "300 Club Draw" which ran for one year and realised in total approx. £10,000. In August of the same year the first Sponsored Cycle took place. The route travelled on this occasion started in the village via Mullinalaghta, Dring, Aughakine and the four white walls and finished in the village

A view of the interior, with the hydraulic stage

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FIRST CYCLE IN AID OF ST. BRIGID'S COMMUNITY CENTRE
Above (from left) — Eileen McNaboe and her daughter, Theresa.

James Comiskey in action. (Past pupil of St. Patrick's N.S., Gowna).

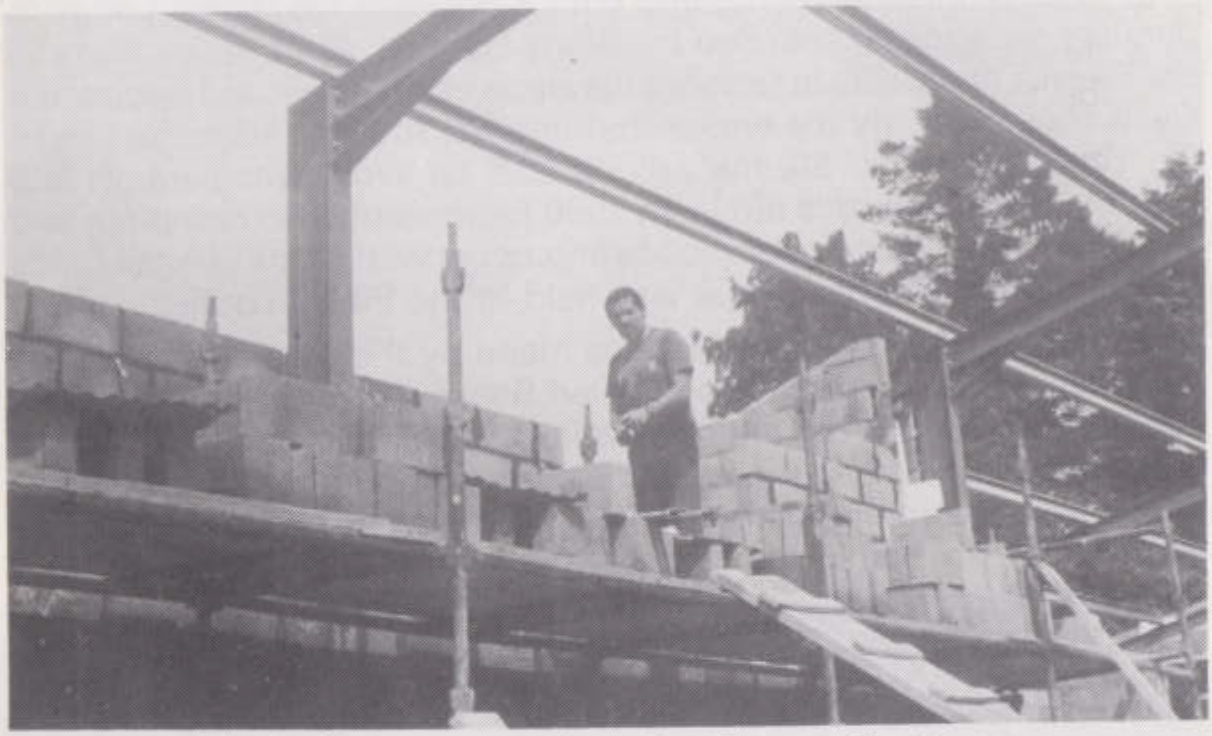
with refreshments being served in the school for the weary cyclists. Both young and old entered this event and all types, sizes and makes of bicycles were on view that day. The end result of the 15 mile cycle was an £1,100 profit. In December, '88 the first Sale of Work was held in the Pikers Lodge. Great interest was shown in this event by the parishioners and supporters as they contributed valuable and unusual prizes ranging from farm produce to articles of clothing and household items.

In 1989 fundraising continued with a Social in the Pikers Lodge in January with music supplied by Dinny Hughes; April, a Tea Party in the Pikers Lodge, and, in October the same year, the second Sponsored Cycle took place. By the end of that time £2,300 was added to funds. On 10th December, '89, the second Sale Of Work was held. £1,450 was the reward for this effort. In 1990 fundraising was complete and the committee had reached the starting target with £21,000 in the funds after a Turkey Supper Social was held in the Pikers Lodge.

In February, 1991, a decision was made by the committee to start stage one of the project. This entailed Benny Cullen being contacted to clear the site and dig the foundations. In demolishing the building great care was taken to preserve the pitch pine purlins and the plaque which were incorporated into the new building thus preserving the link back to the old Hall in the cemetery.

PLAQUE ON THE HALL

On 16th March, 1991, the foundations were laid with the work done by a group of gallant volunteers, namely Seamus Madden, J. P. Boylan, P. J. McStay, Hughie Bannon, Paul Comiskey, John Reilly, Martin Reilly and Alan Sloane. The only beverage consumed on the site that day was tea. The following day, 17th March, Fr. Bland blessed the site after second Mass. Newtowngore Engineering supplied and erected the steel. Blockwork was done by Johnny Dalton and Martin Keegan assisted by Seamus McIntyre.



Martin Keegan at work on the Community Centre.

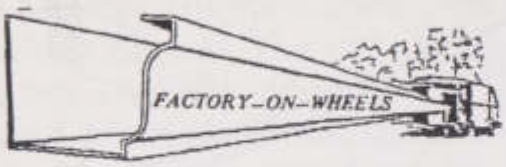
"Reaching the roof at last" — Martin Keegan and Seamus McIntyre.

Johnny Dalton at the block building.

Blocks, sand and gravel were purchased from Tom Gormley, Doran Rock, Hartons Concrete and Ledwith Concrete. When this work was complete the funds which included a grant of £3,500 from National Lottery sources, were expended and another splurge of fund-raising commenced. In September, 1991, a further £965 was made from a Sponsored Cycle. During the year 1992, three further fund-raising events took place, namely a Card Drive, a St. Patrick's Night Jamboree and a sponsored cycle. Total profits, £2,700 approx. A further £600 came from Cavan Co. Council Community Grant Scheme. In September, '92, windows were supplied and fitted by Windowland Ltd., Ballinagh at a cost of £1,900. Sewerage pipes were laid and the boundary wall built. At this time the committee were running out of novel fund-raising ideas when committee member John Reilly introduced the "Weekly Co-Lotto Draw" idea. Careful research was undertaken by John Reilly and Alan Sloane on the rules and running procedures and the committee decided to go ahead. So on 5-12-92 the first draw of the "St. Brigid's Weekly Co-Lotto Draw" took place in the Pikers Lodge. Celebrated athlete, Catherina McKiernan, pulled the winning numbers: 2, 4 and 13 in the first draw. There was no jackpot winner and instead five draws for £10 took place.

Thus, the Co-Lotto was launched and became a great source of income for the next two years. In 1993, the work continued with doors and frames purchased from McManus and Gormley, Carrigallen, at a cost of £1,900. These were fitted by Patsy Smith. The front porch was roofed by Kieran Donohoe and Eamonn Madden. In May, the decision to complete the outside was taken and tenders were sought for the

Best wishes to Loch Gowna Community Council from —



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LAUNCHING THE CO-LOTTO

Catherina McKiernan was the special guest who pulled the winning numbers in the Lough Gowna Co-Lotto Draw in aid of the Community Centre. Pictured in The Pikers Lodge at the inaugural draw were (l. to r.) — Alan Sloane, Treasurer; Catherina McKiernan; Fr. James Bland, P.P., Chairman, and Helen Murray, Secretary.

plastering. Joseph Murtagh, Aughnacliffe, secured this contract and completed a lovely job in a short space of time. Arva Alu-Gutter supplied and fitted the guttering. Pat Walshe made the gate and outside railings which were put in place.

In October, 1993, Terry Harten, Electrical Contractor, installed light fittings, sockets etc., and the painting inside was completed by local volunteers. All the above work was funded by receipts from the weekly Co-Lotto Draw and by a "Casino Fun Night" which was held in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Ballyconnell, on 13th March, 1993. Once again the committee were grateful to John Reilly for this idea. On this occasion, the committee joined forces with the G.A.A. club, agreeing to divide profits equally and to share the job of ticket sales and planning. This was the first Casino Night to be held in Co. Cavan and it was a great success, yielding £4,334.45 profit for each committee. First prize - A Trip For Two to Florida — was won by local man, Enda Boylan, Corfree. Luck was with him that night as a capacity crowd of over 400 attended that night. Those who participated enjoyed the chance to gamble in

Drum for the Co-Lotto.

a real Casino on the style of Monte Carlo and Las Vegas for fun and prizes and a good night was had by all.

In 1994, a gas heating system was installed, the maple floor was laid and plumbing completed. Next on the work agenda was the stage. Early in the planning stages the possibility of installing an Hydraulic Stage was discussed, but cost estimates at that time indicated a figure far beyond our means - £25,000. But since then our committee member, John Reilly, researched the workings of such a stage and realised it was possible to design and construct such a stage on site at a reasonable cost. This he did during the Christmas holidays, 1994, ably assisted at welding and construction by Seamus Smith, Philip O'Reilly and a group of willing volunteers. This particular stage will facilitate the playing of all types of indoor sports.

We are now in the final stages of our project, the road was long but the committees policy to "pay as you go" was a prudent decision and has paid off as our borrowings to date are minimal, a fact you will appreciate. Your support at all times inspired us to keep going and now we look forward to you making maximum use of this fine facility.

Las Vegas Comes to Cavan For The First Time

ON Saturday, 13th March, 1993, at 8 p.m., the doors of the "Woodford and Erne Suite" of the Slieve Russell Hotel opened to what was to be the first fun "Casino Night" in County Cavan.

Everyone arrived, dressed in their finery, ticket in hand, to be greeted by a scene comparable with a night on the town in Las Vegas.

There were croupiers, dealers, chips and cards, and before long everyone was versed on how to play, at the full-sized gaming tables with blackjack and roulette the order of the night.

On stage, was a master of ceremonies, to co-ordinate the smooth and efficient running of the entire operation to ensure that everyone got the maximum amount of enjoyment from the evening.

The glamorous staff at the tables in their beautiful evening dresses left many a Gowna man 'agog', with some losing concentration during the night.

So the "chips" were down and the wheels were in motion. In an atmosphere of soft music from the piano player on the stage, occasionally accompanied by a lady singing the blues, everyone relaxed into the mood.

The excitement grew as many of the players began to accumulate hundreds of thousands of dollars in chips.

At 11.30 p.m. play ceased and chips were counted. The names were taken of the people with the largest amount of chips at each table.

A list of winners was compiled and before long we heard that a young Gowna man, recently engaged, would be winging his way with his fiancée to Florida.

Among the other prizes won were a remote controlled Panasonic Video Recorder, a 14" Colour TV, keyboard, and many beautiful

At the Casino!

sponsored prizes, ten in all, donated by many generous business people.

The hard-working committees of St. Brigid's Community Centre and Gowna G.F.C. were well rewarded for their efforts in selling over 500 tickets. What an achievement for a small community to carry off a night of this stature, normally held by large corporate businesses.

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ST. BRIGID'S HALL

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In Gowna's fair town
Music and song will resound
On that February day
As we hear them all say:
"Come along with you all
To our new community hall".
From Cortober they'll come
It's a day out for some
The Bannons and the Bradys
Those hard men and fine ladies.
Enaghan, Forthill, Cortober
They will gather together
For in this big bright new hall
There is place for us all.
Father Bland will be there
With a great bill of fare
We'll all dance and we'll sing
Until midnight bells ring.
Children shout hip hooray
What a great place to play,
Soccer, P.E., Basketball
Can be held in this hall
For card games, meetings, functions
We'll all meet at this junction
So we say many thanks to you all
For St. Brigid's beautiful new hall.

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MRS. KATIE HOURICAN

OVER a span of ninety years the third Gowna Hall has been erected. But we have in our parish a lady who has lived to witness this. Mrs. Katie Hourican, from Arnaghan, who celebrated her 99th birthday on January 13th, did her teenange dancing in the old hall in the graveyard. Later, she attended the concerts and shows in St. Brigid's. As she was a great lover of Irish music and an accomplished concertina player, she was always eager to pick up new tunes. Once she heard a tune, she was able to retain it and play it from memory when she returned home.

Katie with her favourite friend — the concertina!

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Even to this day, she could lilt a jig or a reel in fine style. Her favourite song was "The Planting of Loch Gowna's Shore".

It would not be unusual to find Katie seated in the midst of a group of English fishermen on their way to the lake as she fingered the Concertina or sang an old Irish song accompanied by her son, Pat.

Born and reared on the shores of Lough Gowna, this lady was as much at home on water as on land and could tell many tales of her boating exploits, how she sailed across the lake and docked on the shore at Cornadrung on her way to Polladoey School, or how on a Sunday afternoon she and her family would set sail to visit her relations miles away. A regular visitor to Katie is Tony Smith, noted fiddle player, and the visit usually ends with a duo on fiddle and concertina.

We wish Katie good health in this her centenary year.

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GOWNA N.S.

ON 19/1/95 the children from St. Patrick's School visited the Aircell factory. The origin of this factory was in St. Brigid's Hall. In 1993 the Department of Education at the behest of the School Inspector, Mr. Brendan O'Bric, sanctioned a grant towards the purchase of P.E. equipment which will be stored in the Community Centre and used by the pupils. Áine Hughes has given us instruction on the use of the equipment enabling us to develop our skills. In 1994, Gowna G.F.C. became Cavan Senior and League Champions. Many of the team started playing in the field behind the school. The broken window on the old hall showed that not all the players had the accuracy of Sean Pierson. During the construction of the stage we have sacrificed our playing field to allow in machinery. Young stars of the future whose names are not yet spoken of are anxiously awaiting a return to the field. Today, there is more optimism. Some emigrants returned with a new generation of children. Hopefully, the 79 children on the roll now will remain to be part of the community and enjoy this fine centre. To the committee and supporters we say Thank You.

JOHN KEOGH,
Principal.

ST. BRIGID'S HALL

On Behalf of the Pupils of St. Patrick's N.S.

LOCH GOWNA has long been known for its beautiful lakes and scenery, and village. But we can now take pride also in our lovely Community Centre. The new hall is situated just a few metres from our school. We will now be able to do P.E. in the hall. We can hold card drives to raise funds for the school, etc. There is a moveable stage there so we can do plays on it. We can also hold parent meetings there. We will be able to play games like indoor football, badminton and basketball. We can also do gymnastics with the equipment we have. All the pupils who come after us will benefit, too, from the beautiful St. Brigid's Community Centre.

LAURA STEPHENS

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PHELIM O'REILLY

IN December, 1986 our committee and parish was robbed of a man of many talents by the sudden and untimely death of Phelim O'Reilly, R.I.P.

Throughout his life in the parish, his commitment to the many organisations in which he was involved, was inspiring. He gave freely of his time, always at hand with practical help and advice.

During his brief term on the committee of St. Brigid's Community Centre, he participated fully at meetings, with many worthwhile suggestions proffered.

Now, on the completion of our project, no doubt Phelim would be very proud to see St. Brigid's Hall restored, on its former site

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

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MEMORIES OF SAINT BRIGID'S HALL

AS a small boy going to Mass in 1938, I saw Saint Brigid's Hall being built, and over half a century later watched as its tired old walls crumbled before the relentless bulldozer. This picture always evokes a flood of memories of the "Life and Times" of Saint Brigid's. Many of those happenings have been dealt with elsewhere in this booklet, so I will confine myself to a few events from the past which come easily into focus.

The 1940's saw much activity in the hall. Early on in the decade the L.D.F. and L.S.F., i.e. the Local Defence Force and the Local Security Force used it for parades during the bad weather. They marched and drilled with real rifles while we small ones at home drilled with broom handles and "caimin" sticks. Later as petrol rationing eased and the threat of war receded the travelling "Show Crowds" began coming to the hall. Each crowd usually stayed for a week and put on great dramas like "Murder in the Red Barn", "East Lynn", "Noreen Bawn", and the poignant "Song of Bernadette". There was a great reception for these plays by the audience who really appreciated the quality performances of The Bailey's and Nicholas Carrickfords Troupe.

Early in 1950, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann was born and its aims and ideals were enthusiastically embraced around Gowna. Irish music and singing blossomed again and the Protestant School was the mecca for great musical nights. Tommy Halton (flute), Packie Joe Reilly (fiddle), Packie Donohoe, Drumgore (fiddle), Fr. Murray, Portanure (accordion), and Pat Smith (accordion), played away the hours to their hearts content, while the great Margaret O'Reilly really came into her own with her magnificent singing of fine Irish ballads. The school became too small for the crowds and they moved to Saint Brigid's, where ceili dancing took over. Many of the dancers would have learned their steps and movements a decade earlier when Master Murray taught us all the well known Irish dances at the 6d. ceilidhe.

It was no surprise when Gowna decided to host the County Fleadh Cheoil in the late 'fifties. This was done at very short notice, as another town had been authorised to run it, but could not even get the preliminary organisation off the ground. So we stepped into the breach with a committee of 25, all trojan workers. It was a great success. The official opening was held in the hall, and I as Chairman introduced the parish priest at the time, who also happened to be a Canon. He was a great old man, but he became a little confused, as I did the introduction in Irish, and when he came as far as saying there was a great future for the Fleadh Cheoil, he inadvertently said, "there is a great future for Fianna Fail". As everyone knew him to be a strong Fine Gael

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supporter, that statement brought down the house.

In 1957 the Department of Defence came again to Saint Brigid's Hall to form a unit of the F.C.A. There was a great response, and 32 young men from around the parish were enlisted. The job of getting them into suitable sized uniforms and boots got under way. One young man replete in overcoat and wellingtons had a pair of size ten boots in his hand, and was busy surmising whether or not they would fit him. "They might fit me" he would say "and again they might not fit me". "One thing is certain" quipped John Reilly of Corfree, "they won't fit you over the wellingtons, son". Finally, we were kitted out, and we marched and drilled with real guns, and were soon to become one of the best units in the 17th Battalion.

In the days before the large ballrooms were built, and when there was no hotel in the village, the hall was the centre for all entertainment. Saint Brigid's was considered to be one of the leading dance halls. Indeed, it had its quota of good dancers, who still show their style and skill at the Senior Citizens parties in The Pikers Lodge. Dances in the old hall began early and finished early. Young people were coming home at half past twelve, instead of going out as happens now. There was much less emphasis on drink and people then didn't feel any need of a few drinks before they faced the dance floor. This was an era of good music, good dancing and good craic, and the memories of it are all happy ones. The old Saint Brigid looked after us well; let's hope the new one can be as good.

BARRY HUGHES.

MEMORIES FROM AN EXILE

MY first dance was in St. Brigid's Hall in 1947, Sonny Lynch's Band on stage. A most enjoyable night which still stands out in my memory. The Concerts on St. Stephen's Night with our wonderful Gowna Troupe were excellent. Master Murray (R.I.P.) taught us all the ceilidhe dances on Wednesday nights.

Another memory comes to mind — The Bachelors' Bread Baking Competition in 1958 — won by Seamus Reilly (R.I.P.). Now, thanks to a wonderful hard-working and dedicated committee, St. Brigid's is back, bigger and better than ever. A great job! Well done to a great Gowna team. Long live St. Brigid's. Thanks for the memories.

MAI DONOHUE CLARKE.

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GOWNA PARISH

Early Times:

On Inchmore, a 30-acre island in the upper (southern) end of Lough Gowna, there are some remains of a monastery, including parts of a church. The original foundation of a monastic settlement on the island was around 550 AD by Saint Columba and his followers; it was about 563 AD that Columba left Ireland for Iona. The island, sanctified by this monastery, had a cemetery, (a 'sleeping place') to which bodies were brought across from the mainland on a stone slab.

Danish invaders ransacked the settlement on Inchmore in 804 AD. Three hundred years later, 1124, saw a new monastic building on the island by the Augustinian religious order of canons regular, the 'Austin Canons'. ('Canons regular' means a group of clergy-clerics-priests living together under a semi-monastic rule of life; the opposite is 'secular canons' – clergy attached to a cathedral or collegiate church either as full-time or part-time on honorary staff, but each man living in his own house, with his own family if he has any, his own cow or television or pigs or car or whatever). The new monastery was burned in 1315 by Edward Bruce.

The first church near the village now called Loch Gowna was erected inside a fortified area. It was thatched and later had a roof of wooden tiles. It was destroyed by the Big Wind in 1839. An old story says that it was connected by a tunnel to a crannog refuge built in the lake.

The Present Church:

The church shown in our cover photograph was opened and licensed for worship in October, 1840. It was built at a cost of £730.40, provided by the Board of First Fruits, by a Mr. Haig from Cavan. In 1908, when Dr. G. G. Wadsworth was rector, the vestry at the west end and the porch were built, and with the aid of voluntary work the furnishings were renovated. The organ was installed in 1898; it was provided by a gift from the Carnegie Fund. It has recently been completely overhauled.

In 1973 a considerable job of renovation and re-decoration was carried out including the carpeting of the church and the installation of heating appliances. This was provided by the parishioners in memory of their parents.

The Present Gowna Parish Church

Gowna Parish:

Historically, Gowna has been in the Diocese of Ardagh. IN 1959 it was transferred by the Church of Ireland to the Diocese of Kilmore in order to help the pastoral organisation of that part of County Cavan by maintaining a cure centred on Arva with its well-established glebe. In earlier years Granard had been the major local ecclesiastical centre to which Gowna was linked. Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Ireland in 1837 described Gowna, then called Scrabby or Ballimackellenny, as 'a vicarage in the Diocese of Ardagh, part of the Union of Granard'. In his list of clergy of Ardagh Diocese the historian Canon J. B. Leslie describes Gowna church at the time of its building as a chapel-of-ease in Drumlummon (parish). In 1874/5 the following were full parishes with incumbents in this area: Granard, Abbeylara, Columbkille and Gowna.

By 1906 officially, though perhaps some years earlier in fact, Gowna and Columbkille were grouped together with the incumbent living in Gowna; and this cure existed until 1952. Then Gowna became part of the Granard/Edgeworthstown cure and Columbkille part of the Ballinalee group of parishes; these arrangements lasted until Gowna was transferred to the Arva cure in Kilmore Diocese in 1959 and Columbkille to the Arva cure in 1977.

The Clergy of Gowna:

Before 1784 the Vicar was the Rev. Christopher Robinson (he had five curates).

1784 – 1826 the Rev. James Adams.
1826 – 1851 the Rev. William Elliott.
1851 – 1872 the Rev. Thomas Ireland.
1872 – 1877 the Rev. Philip John Moran (died July 1, 1877).
1877 – 1880 the Rev. Thomas Lindsay.
1880 – 1903 the Rev. Thomas Taylor (killed in a traffic accident with a Dublin tram).
1903 – 1917 the Rev. Dr. George Guthridge Wadsworth.
1917 – 1922 the Rev. Andrew Graham.
1922 – 1925 the Rev. William Thomas Stewart.
1925 – 1926 the Rev. Percy H. Richardson.
1926 – 1930 the Rev. Simon Carter Armstrong.
1930 – 1937 the Rev. James Wilson, afterwards Dean of Elphin and Ardagh.
1937 – 1940 the Rev. Cecil Maurice Kerr, afterwards Archdeacon of Elphin and Ardagh.
1940 – 1944 the Rev. Henry Irvine Keys Anderson.
1944 – 1946 the Rev. William John McKenna.
1946 – 1952 the Rev. Robert Desmond Holtby, the last resident clergyman in Gowna.

* * *

1952 – 1959 Archdeacon C. M. Kerr, rector of the Granard/Edgeworthstown cure.
1959 – 1977 Canon Alexander Woodside Scott, rector of the Arva cure.
1978 – 1982 the Rev. David Brian Wilson of Arva.
From 1982 the Rev. Canon J. R. T. Watson and Canon from 1988.

We are indebted to Mr. James R. Sloane, Gowna Parish for most of the details of these notes, including the list of clergy.

Wishing St. Brigid's Community Centre
every success in the future —

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BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

THE completion of the Community Centre has given us all much pleasure. It has been a much needed amenity to provide a focal point for the fostering of greater social interaction for this community. We are very grateful to all those who have worked and planned to bring the project to its happy conclusion and thus providing a common possession for the enjoyment of everyone.

Aside from a monastic community or other closely knit organisation, the term 'community' usually refers to a body of persons within the same locality, possibly having very diverse life-styles, but bound by family relationships, common endeavour, friendship, neighbourliness and care for each other's welfare and who are loyal to and supportive of each other. We certainly possess all of this in Loch Gowna, especially co-operation and good neighbourliness in the Christian tradition.

We all look forward to the, no doubt, many happy occasions for which we shall assemble in this centre in the future. In the meantime, heartiest congratulations to everyone on this splendid achievement.

Signed: JACK WATSON (Rev. Canon)
Rector of Gowna Parish from 1982 Canon from 1988.

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A DREAM COME TRUE

IT is a wonderful achievement to-day in Loch Gowna to see St. Brigid's Community Centre officially opened and blessed by clergy from both Churches. The Centre was badly needed for our young people, footballers or anybody interested in sport to keep themselves fit over the winter months. The schoolchildren will also be able to use the Centre in bad weather.

We were so long without a place like this. It took a lot of hard work from all of the committee, voluntary workers, and especially all the people who supported and bought Co-Lotto tickets. Without their support the building of the Centre would not be possible. The co-operation of the whole parish towards this project had to be seen to be believed. The people who put their heads together and fitted a stage which can be left at floor level for games or raised for plays, sketches, musical groups is a big achievement and, in itself, a wonderful piece of workmanship.

A special word of thanks to Fr. Bland, our Chairman, for having a room available for meetings; Helen Murray, Secretary; Alan Sloane, Treasurer; Paul Comiskey, Vice-Chairman, and all the committee members. It is a privilege for me to be part of the committee to see how people of different denominations and politics can sit down and discuss the best possible way this project could be achieved. Since coming to Loch Gowna in 1963 this co-operation has gone from strength to strength and, God willing, will continue to do so.

BILLY SIMPSON

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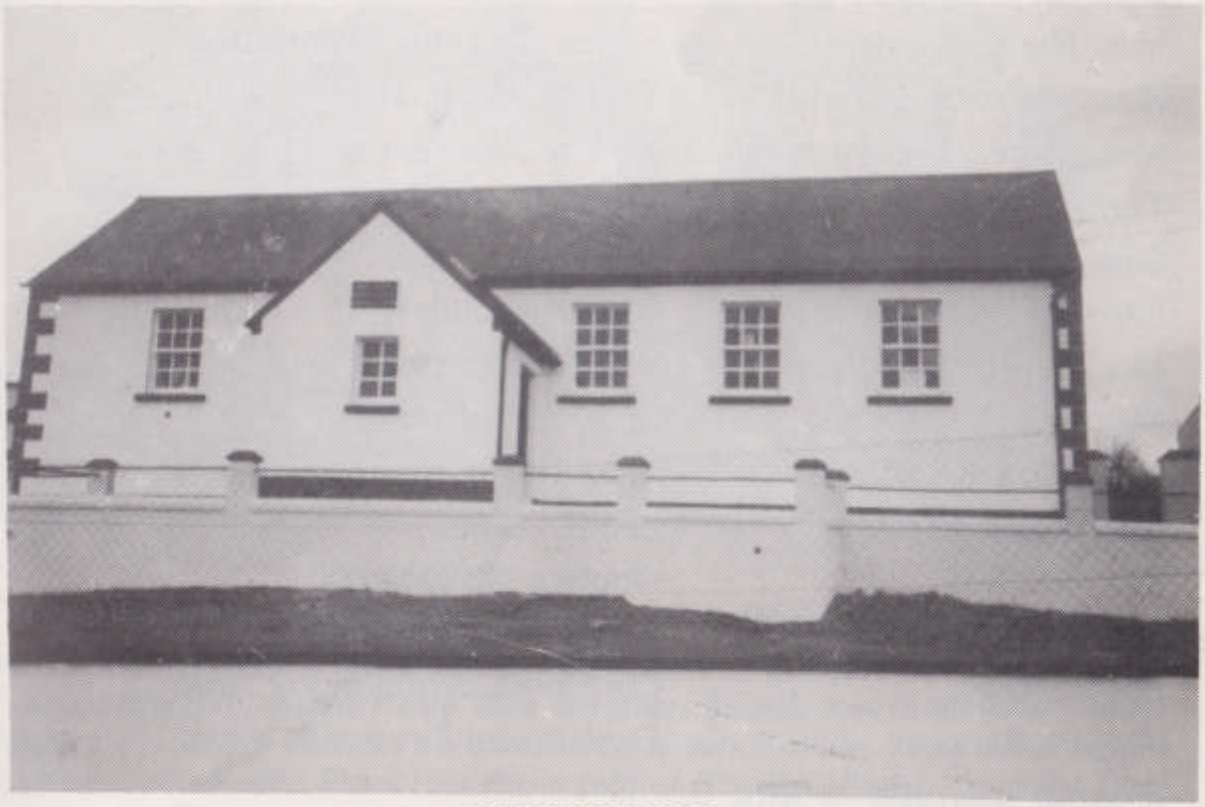
ST. PATRICK'S N.S., GOWNA



CORTOBER N.S.

PRESENT SET OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1995

OFFICERS:

CHAIRMAN: Fr. James Bland, P.P.
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Paul Comiskey.
SECRETARY: Helen Murray.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY: Mary Smith.
JOINT TREASURERS: Sean Hughes,
Alan Sloane.

COMMITTEE MEMBER	ORGANISATION REPRESENTED
John Reilly	Building Committee, Parish Council
Martin Reilly	Building Committee, Parish Council
Seamus Madden	Building Committee, Parish Council
Mrs. Nancy Boylan	Senior Citizens' Committee
Mrs. Veronica Conaty	Tourist Association
Mrs. Monica Timmermanns	Tourist Association
Terry Harten	G.A.A.
Billy Simpson	G.A.A.
Barry Hughes	Camogie Club
Mrs. Eileen McNaboe	Scór Committee
Mrs. Mary Brady	Scór Committee
Alan Sloane	Tidy Towns
Mrs. Sheila O'Reilly	Ladies' Club
P. J. McStay	Anglers' Association
Joe Lynch	Anglers' Association
Pat Sorohan	Cormore/Cordonnaghy Area
Hughie Bannon	Forthill and Drumhilla Area
(Former member — Mrs. J. O'Rourke)	

APPRECIATION

AS we await in anticipation the opening of St. Brigid's Community Centre we acknowledge there are a number of people to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. Firstly, Fr. James Bland, P.P., for his leadership and encouragement over the years. Fr. Columba McCole for his words of advice during Fr. Bland's absence. The hard-working Building Committee: Alan Sloane, John Reilly, Seamus Madden, Martin Reilly, who planned the operation and saw it through to the end. Those who assisted us during the long fund-raising campaign — people who donated prizes, sponsored various events, ticket sellers, especially Sr. Mary Moore and Geraldine Harten (non-committee members); the general public who responded so generously all the way; the proprietors of the Pikers Lodge, Whites, Fitzpatricks for allowing us to hold the "Co-Lotto" draws on their premises; the teachers of St. Patrick's N.S. for their tolerance; the many people who gave voluntary help, loaned tractors and other machinery. To Seamus Smith and Philip O'Reilly who when approached, gladly gave up their Christmas holidays in order to prepare the site for the stage. To all those people we say a very sincere THANK YOU.

THE COMMITTEE.

ST. BRIGID'S COMMUNITY CENTRE COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1994

Back row (from left) — Pat Sorohan, Hugh Bannon, Seamus Smith, Joe Lynch, Seamus Madden, Martin Reilly, Billy Simpson. Middle row (from left) — Barry Hughes, Fr. James Bland, Paul Comiskey, Helen Murray, Terry Hartin, Sean Hughes, John Reilly. Front row (from left) — Sheila O'Reilly, Veronica Conaty, Monica Timmermans, Nancy Boylan, Eileen McNaboe, Mary Brady, Mary Smith. (Inset: P. J. McStay and Alan Sloane).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AS Chairman of St. Brigid's Community Centre Committee, I would like on my own behalf and that of the people of the parish to thank fellow members of the committee for their commitment and hard work in re-building St. Brigid's Hall. There were many important decisions to be made at various stages in planning, construction and fundraising, but the great sense of cooperation and the expertise of the members, and especially their willingness to attend the many meetings, ensured a sensible and mature approach always. The result of their efforts over the last number of years is a beautiful, well-finished and adaptable building with a unique hydraulic stage to serve all the needs of a true living community. Their willingness to administer and fund the Centre in the future under a local Trusteeship will be an invaluable asset.

A special word of thanks, too, is due to the Sub-committee — Nancy Boylan, Helen Murray, Veronica Conaty, Eileen McNaboe, Barry and Sean Hughes — who produced this commemorative booklet. These "budding historians" have given generously of their time in preparing and writing the script. They are very grateful to all who supplied articles, old photographs and reminiscences to add to their own research and the appeal of the booklet and to typist Mary Lynch. Their work is worthy of an appearance on any chat show!

We are grateful to Bishop Colm O'Reilly for his help at stages of the project, particularly legal problems involved. We were looking forward to having him on the opening day, 12th February, 1995, but unfortunately he cannot be with us. We wish him a speedy return to health. We welcome Rt. Rev. Monsignor Patrick Earley, P.P. V.G., who takes his place. We welcome, too, Canon Jack Watson, The Rectory, Arva, and Right Rev. M. H. G. Mayes, See House, Kilmore, Cavan to represent the Church of Ireland community.

We congratulate everyone on a job well done, and we wish them many years of enjoyment of the new St. Brigid's Community Centre.

Go Gcúití Dia bhur saothar libh.

JAMES A. BLAND, P.P.,
Chairman.

ST. BRIGID'S HALL, 1991 BEFORE DEMOLITION